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★ SEP 8 - 1933

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Sept. 12, 1933.

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "Home Dyeing." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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No sooner do fall days arrive, than along comes the problem of getting the family and the house outfitted for winter. Time to make school clothes for the youngsters and some fall and winter outfits for ourselves. And time to make the house look cozy and attractive for the cold days when we'll be spending our days inside. Here's where the make-over artist can help the household budget considerably. If you're clever at making over clothes you can save many a dollar. Left-over materials from the attic or even the rag-bag often provide attractive household furnishings, if you know how to rejuvenate them. Out comes the sewing machine, the pressing board and the dye pot to make new clothes, new curtains, new upholstery from old fabrics. Dyeing is one of those very old household arts that can be a great success and a money-saver, if you know how to do it. On the other hand, it can also be a great failure, a waste of good material and good time, if you do it carelessly or if you miss some of the tricks of good dyeing. I'm sure you have seen some of the tragedies of the dye-pot -- material that came out hopelessly streaked or spotted or that was the wrong color or even material that went to pieces during dyeing.

Fortunately, specialists at the Bureau of Home Economics have been making a special study of home dyeing lately and have a lot of information ready to help you if you plan to do any dyeing this fall.

The specialists say that in general animal fibers like wool and pure silk combine more readily with dyes than do cotton, linen and other vegetable fibers. Wool is probably the easiest material to dye with all kinds of dyes. Silk is also a good material to take dye. Cotton, linen and other vegetable fibers are more difficult and they are likely to crock or fade later.

As we've mentioned before in these chats, many silk goods used today are weighted with metal or some other filling. Weighted silks are poor risks for the dye pot. They are apt to dye unevenly and they often weaken or go to pieces in the dye bath. Better test a sample of your silk to see if it is weighted before you try to dye it. Remember that simple burning test for weighted silk? Light a match to a small sample. Pure silk will burn readily, giving off an odor like burning hair, and leaving a round ball of crisp, black residue. Weighted silk burns with no flame and leaves the outline of the yarn or fabric in the ash.

Another type of fabric that is a poor risk for the dye pot is fabric in a garment that has been badly streaked or faded by sunshine. Such material won't re-dye evenly. You see, sunburn actually changes the character of the fibers. Sun can scorch just like a hot iron. Although the change appears slight, the burned part will dye a much deeper shade. To get an even color such material must be dyed a dark color or black.

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People often ask the best form in which to buy dye. You can purchase household dye in powder, liquid or cake form. If you use powdered dye, be sure to dissolve and strain it through a cloth before you add it to the dye bath. Otherwise you're likely to get a streaked, uneven color. Some people tie the powder up in a cheesecloth bag and put it in a soap shaker and shake it in the bath until it dissolves. That makes a smoother color and saves the hands. Cake dyes are very convenient to use. Cake dyes combined with soap help cleanse the material as they dye it.

Some dyes on the market are meant for tinting only, not dyeing. These you use in cool water. Tinting is a quick way to color a fabric but of course the color isn't permanent. You'll need to re-tint each time you launder the article. The boiled-in dyes are the ones that give the permanent color.

And speaking of fast color, let's remind ourselves right here to be sure to buy a dye that suits the fabric and to follow the directions that come with it. Some dyes are fast to silk or wool but not to cotton. Some dyes are fast with one method of dyeing and not with others. Then, some dyes are fast to washing but not to sunlight or not to perspiration.

Now about getting a garment ready for dyeing. Before you even start to dye, remove all trimmings, buttons and so on and rip out hems, pleats and linings so the dye can penetrate the garment evenly. If you plan to remodel the garment, rip it up first and dye the pieces. And remove all spots and stains. Dye won't cover up spots. And it won't cover up soil either. So wash the material well in soap and water. Rinse it thoroughly, for any soap left in the fabric causes difficulty in dyeing. Also be sure you wash out any sizing, if you are dyeing cotton and linen. Sizing left in when you dye a new material also causes streaking. If the fabric is faded in spots, better level or strip the color by boiling in several soap solutions of soft water and good neutral soap and by using a color remover.

Now a word or two about the equipment for dyeing. You need a kettle of granite or agate ware, large enough so that the material can move about in the water freely. For good results you need plenty of water. Soft water gives better penetration of the dye than hard water. You'll also need a pair of scales to weigh the fabric before it is wet in order to determine just the amount of dye needed. And you'll need sticks of smooth wood or glass towel rods for stirring. Of course, you know that during dyeing the material must be in constant motion. All folds of the garment need to be opened out. And be sure that no part of the material floats on top of the dye bath or remains at the bottom.

Well that's all about home-dyeing today. Some other day soon we'll go into all the details of the actual process.

Please bring pencils tomorrow. We'll discuss ways of economizing in garden vegetables.

